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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 KABUL 004251

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STATE FOR SCA/FO, SCA/A, S/CRS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN
CENTCOM FOR CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-76 POLAD

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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR PRESIDENT KARZAI'S UPCOMING VISIT
TO WASHINGTON

Classified By: AMBASSADOR RONALD E. NEUMANN FOR REASON 1.4(A) AND (D)

SUMMARY

¶1. (S) President Karzai is more self-confident than three months ago, but not politically stronger. Karzai worries endlessly about how firm our support is -- and how much he must do. He will be looking for support and encouragement of every kind during this visit, but assurances must be balanced by a clear message -- from a partner and friend -- that he needs to do more himself. He deserves praise for recent good decisions on a new Supreme Court, Attorney General, and governors. Karzai needs to leave knowing there is no question we are committed to a long-term partnership. He is at the lowest point of public confidence in his government. A deteriorating security situation, coupled with rampant corruption at all levels, has sapped confidence and feeds public perceptions of a weak government and governance system. Record poppy cultivation and opium production is seen by the public as evidence that warlords, corrupt officials, and the Taliban -- rather than an accountable, honest government -- are in charge. For too many Afghans, the government is simply not credible enough to justify the life and death risks involved in committing to and defending its programs and future. Changing these views will take investment and time. Karzai urgently needs more support -- for enhanced security, infrastructure development, and governance initiatives to reverse the psychology and fill the village-level security gap. But, much as he does not like hearing it, Karzai also needs to understand he must do more himself on corruption, counternarcotics, and good governance. Our tough message on the need for strong leadership will be much effective if we do more to meet Karzai's urgent needs.

¶2. (S) The GOA continues, with good reason, to mistrust its neighbors, most of all, Pakistan. Karzai recently took some political risk to host and appear publicly with Musharraf in Kabul. The public aspects of this meeting were carefully choreographed by both sides to accent the positive in the run-up to their upcoming meetings in Washington. The visit went very well, with Musharraf acknowledging Pakistan's past support for the Taliban, but there is deep skepticism -- on

the part of those who wish Karzai well and those who do not -- as to whether Pakistan will actually take measures that will improve the Afghan security situation and strengthen Karzai's position. Musharraf's recent depiction of the Taliban as a Pashtun insurgency deeply angered and insulted Afghans of many groups. End Summary

Karzai's Mood and Needs

13. (S) Karzai has recovered personally from his funk of last summer and is trying to go on the offensive on security, corruption, narcotics and regional cooperation. Recent public appearances such as at the recent National Counter-narcotics shura, his meetings with the Governors at the Governor's Conference, his public appearances with President Musharraf in Kabul, and his September 14 trip to Jalalabad to join Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz in opening the new 74 KM Jalalabad-Torkham road all demonstrated some willingness to lead. He will be looking for acknowledgement and for iron-clad assurances that we are committed for the long-haul. Karzai will also be looking for increased material support. Top of his list will be additional equipment for the Afghanistan National Security Forces.

Support for Afghan Security Forces:

14. (S) Karzai will want to see strong continued support for the training and equipping of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). We have now trained about 34,000 troops in the ANA, which has been acquitting itself increasingly well.

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However, Karzai will continue to argue that it needs more land mobility, airlift capability, and modern equipment. In addition, training of the ANA is still well short of the 70,000 man army that Karzai wants. Meanwhile, training and equipping of the 62,000 national police enshrined in the Afghan Compact is still in a relatively early stage, and has not yet resulted in an ANP with the skills necessary to take up its national role. Moreover, the security situation on the ground has deteriorated considerably from the time when the ANSF numbers were agreed on in the Afghan Compact. Rebalancing the police force to bring additional ANP into the four southern provinces after the Mountain Thrust campaign has been significantly delayed, in part because the Ministry of Interior (MOI) has been unable to recruit sufficiently or convince existing units from other provinces to move into provinces with difficult security situations. Difficulties in training and fielding regular ANP have resulted in Karzai (and us) looking in desperation for stopgap solutions, including recruitment of auxiliary police. We should signal to Karzai that we have the will and resources to follow through with police training, but we also need to underline that this will require invigorated follow-through from MOI.

15. (S) We defer to the Department to develop a response to Karzai's concerns about NATO troop levels, but wish to stress that the USG's words must convey confidence that all military requirements will be met before the end of ISAF IX.

Infrastructure and Development Support:

16. (S) Karzai will also want as much infrastructure and development support as he can get, and he will want as much of that to go directly into the GOA's hands as possible. We have repeatedly noted that where roads end, the Taliban and insurgency begins. The same principle applies to other infrastructure support. Many district capitals still remain unconnected to the national road system and without the infrastructure needed to distance them from the tipping point toward warlord-Taliban control.

17. (S) As the situation in the south has deteriorated this

summer, we appear on the brink of receiving an additional USD \$60 million for key road construction in the south, but funding this year from the supplemental budget does not do anything to fund the projects needed to fill the space opened up by successful security operations. One of the focuses of the newly created Policy Action Group (PAG) has been to try to mobilize development support that can be quickly deployed into areas following NATO/ISAF campaigns. The goal is to give the population reasons to move back in and commit to the government. We have requested USD 100 million to provide robust support for the PRT program which will enable us to support capacity-building and rural development projects that convince populations that the government does indeed count for something in the provinces by virtue of being able to deliver some services.

¶8. (S) We should also reaffirm our commitment to doing everything we can to complete the major infrastructure projects for energy (the Kajaki dam/Southern Electricity Transmission System in the Helmand Valley and the Northern Electricity Transmission System which could bring grid electricity to forty percent of the Afghan population versus six percent today) and the ring road projects. Security challenges have resulted in delay of and increased costs for both key roads and development of the electrical grid system.

A Politically Sensitive Approach to Poppy Problem:

¶9. (S) Karzai understands the corrosive effect of opium production on the people and body politic of Afghanistan, and the nexus between narco-trafficking, corruption, and security. He pushed local eradication, but fears the backlash of aerial spraying and focuses instead on greater support for alternative livelihood and development assistance programs. Confronted with the political realities in the U.S., Karzai will do law enforcement and eradication, but

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will be concerned that the pace of and fallout from these approaches not lose the war with the Taliban.

Support for More Action from Pakistan:

¶10. (S) Karzai may express reservations about Pakistan's intentions. While a well-orchestrated visit to Kabul by President Musharraf produced generally positive public comment, a Musharraf speech in Brussels that referred to the domestic Afghan element of the insurgency prompted an angry statement from the Foreign Ministry here. While Karzai wants to get along better with his larger neighbor to the east, bitter years of experience make Afghans cynical and create risks for any Afghan politician who steps forward to improve relations, as Karzai has done. Recognizing U.S. interests are best served by a less tense relationship across the Durand Line, we should acknowledge the risks that Karzai has taken and applaud his leadership. We must encourage him to continue to reach out to Musharraf; the Pakistani leader is leaning further forward than ever before. Astute relationship-management by Karzai could force Musharraf to take an actual step in the right direction, e.g., by arresting a large number of significant Taliban figures. But keeping Karzai moving in the right direction requires assurance of our own determination to press for more GOP action, especially against the Taliban leadership.

----- In Return, What We Need from Karzai -----

¶11. (S) We have advised that it would be very helpful for Karzai to say "thank you" to the American public for the support given and sacrifices made so far and to explain why it is critical that we sustain and even increase our efforts. Key messages should be that Afghans are allies in the GWOT, that our engagement will ward off another 9/11, that Afghans embrace a moderate version of Islam that does not pose a

threat to the West, and that Afghanistan is prepared to step up its effort to ensure that continued security and reconstruction aid will succeed in securing this vision.

On Corruption:

¶12. (S) It will be easier for Karzai to say thank you for support than to accept what he will see as criticism. He nevertheless needs to hear in Washington what he is hearing in Kabul -- as advice from a friend and partner -- that he must do more to fight corruption and encourage good governance. Partly in response to the weakness of his government and as an attempt to balance out competing political interests, Karzai has too often looked past stronger candidates who would like to serve to appoint weak and corrupt individuals to key positions. He needs to demand that the new Attorney General, Counter Narcotics Court and Supreme Court deliver high-profile prosecutions and convictions of corrupt officials, and he must support them when they act.

¶13. (S) Karzai must not only remove corrupt governors and officials and vigorously pursue prosecutions of high-profile narcotics trafficking and corruption cases, but he must insist that local officials charged with corruption be held accountable. We need Karzai to keep moving ahead on replacing the 14 bad police chiefs identified by the probation board. He needs to understand that, even when the evidence might not stand up in court, the scent of corruption among his staff, ministers, governors, and close relatives is as corrosive to the credibility of his government and leadership as proven crimes. One of the most symbolically important things Karzai could do would be to persuade his brother Ahmed Wali Karzai, widely understood to be corrupt and a narcotics trafficker, to leave the country. Karzai must understand that failure to move in this area undermines his leadership at home but also invites questions from Congress and the American People. Afghanistan should ratify the UN Convention against corruption.

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On Counternarcotics:

¶14. (S) Karzai has been advised that American audiences, especially on the hill, need to hear him outline actions he is willing to take to fight narcotics and the terrorism it finances. He needs to avoid complaining that the West has not provided enough alternative livelihood support, but rather acknowledge the situation is critical and say unequivocally that his government -- including its centrally-appointed governors -- are prepared to go after poppy production. Karzai should acknowledge, at least privately, that he understands there is no realistic alternative to ground based spraying in provinces at or near the tipping point.

On Financing Provincial and Local Government:

¶15. (S) Karzai and the legislative branch need to rethink how to fund and structure provincial and local government. The current provincial system has an extremely limited budget that lacks transparency and fiscal sustainability. Governors now rely on ad hoc methods and budgets to carry out their responsibilities -- an open invitation to corruption. The GOA needs to raise revenue in a transparent manner, follow through with customs reform, and begin convincing the Afghan people that they cannot expect to receive services from a government they are not willing to pay for. The Ministry of Interior must follow through on rank-and-pay police reform as its highest priority, with a goal of getting nationally-trained police into every province at the earliest possible date.

On Pakistan:

¶16. (S) The two leaders say they are committed to moving ahead "as friends" on a process to address cross-border issues, including the insurgency. As noted previously, Karzai will need results to convince the Afghan public he was not hoodwinked by Musharraf, but he also needs to instruct his subordinates to avoid public remarks that criticize Pakistan. We should ask him to make clear to Musharraf that he is open to pursuing confidence-building measures, making it easier for the top GOP leadership to deliver on its part of the bargain.

On Leadership:

¶17. (S) In the end, much of what Karzai needs to do boils down to leadership. We must encourage continued positive momentum while impressing on Karzai the need to invest his political capital to build his national stature, lest it continue to ebb away. That means taking some tough decisions and actions -- on sustaining and nurturing political engagement with Pakistan, on fighting corruption and drug trafficking, on standing up to his own family and clan to demonstrate he is the President of and for all Afghans, and on sharing responsibility with ISAF and Coalition Forces for improving security. We, in turn, must recognize he is not strong enough and Afghanistan not stable enough for him to do these things without our encouragement, our occasional pressure, and a lot of our money and force to back him up.
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